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DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: UNAMID DEPLOYMENT UPDATE, MARCH 4, 2009

REF: A) KHARTOUM 227  
B) KHARTOUM 191  
C) KHARTOUM 142

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As of March 3, 2009, the total number of UNAMID military personnel was 12,939, or 66.16 percent of the total authorized force strength. UNAMID continues to prepare for the arrival of the Ethiopian attack helicopter unit, welcoming an Ethiopian officer assigned to facilitate the unit's transfer, which is tentatively scheduled for June. Several new Nepalese units are in transit for Darfur. All currently-deployed UNAMID battalions, except one, are at full strength. Sudanese officials continue to delay the issuance of visas for experienced European officers (following the rejection of visas for U.S. officers.) End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On February 23, UNAMID welcomed the arrival of an Ethiopian lieutenant colonel in charge of liaising with engineers in Nyala to prepare for the arrival of the attack helicopters. The Ethiopian officer will work out of the office of Colonel Noddy Stafford, J5, a positive sign of the high priority UNAMID places on this project. UNAMID is still awaiting the temporary transfer to UNAMID of 90 Chinese engineers from UNMIS in Wau, to assist with the construction of the landing zone for the helicopters. Speaking with poloff on March 3, Stafford indicated that it may require high-level intervention between UNMIS and UNAMID for the 90 engineers to be transferred in a timely manner. Now that the Ethiopians have approved Nyala as a site for the helicopters, UNAMID will work with the Government of Sudan (GOS) for approval to position the attack helicopters at Nyala's air field.

¶3. (SBU) Tangible, positive improvements in deployment marked the end of February 2009, as practically two-thirds of total force strength, or 12,939 troops, were in place by the first week of March. According to Stafford, all 12 battalions of peacekeeping troops are up to full strength, save the South African battalion, now only 250 troops short. The last 183 troops from the 1st Egyptian battalion have just arrived, and the last 150 Senegalese troops have recently deployed to Umm Barro, in the far northwest corner of North Darfur.

¶4. (SBU) Nepalese contributions to UNAMID continue apace in 2009. The incoming Nepalese Force Reserve Company and Nepalese Sector Reserve Company, each 150 troops strong, will arrive in May for deployment to El Fasher. Equipment and vehicles for the incoming Nepalese companies are currently arriving in Port Sudan, and a door-to-door contract for shipment from the Red Sea port to Darfur will ensure that the equipment reaches the latter when the troops arrive in several months.

¶5. (SBU) Most disappointingly, Stafford noted that Sudanese authorities are still holding up visas for several high-level, experienced military officers whose presence in Darfur is essential

to the success of the mission. One French officer was due to arrive in February but has since been redeployed due to lengthy visa delays; three British officers have been waiting up to three months; and the GOS has refused to issue visas to the U.S. military officers assigned to UNAMID. Stafford said: "I need people who are well-trained with the breadth of experience that British, French and American officers have. Small numbers have a disproportionate effect when they serve at the top. This is a fantastic place to serve but it is so hard to get here."

16. (SBU) Comment: UNAMID deployment issues have taken a back seat to the long awaited ICC arrest warrant against President Bashir and the subsequent crisis over the March 4 GOS expulsion of 10 international NGOs. Nonetheless, over time we should continue to engage the regime on the issue of visas for Western military officers assigned to UNAMID - whenever the relationship allows for such engagement. The Sudanese know that such officers will have a dramatic impact on operations and therefore prefer not to have them deployed. The regime also views the officers as Western spies in Darfur who will usurp the role of the force's African leadership, which is the principal rationale it has provided for expelling the NGOs. This apparent GOS strategy supports the views of those who argue that the GOS wants to hide its activities in Darfur, and also wants to limit the effectiveness of UN and NGO operations in Darfur. If not reversed or modified, the NGO expulsions will place additional stress on the capacity of both UN agencies and on UNAMID as they deal with the massive fallout created by this development.

FERNANDEZ